

Flesh-tearing Verbal Violence in the Book of Job

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The book of Job begins with a series of violent events that threaten to erase the meaning of life from an innocent person. Tempestuous disasters and marauding raiders come to Job and his family, because one day Satan lures God into a wager by asking poignantly, “Does Job fear God for no reason? (*hinnām*)” (Job 1:9). Because God couldn’t stand the thought of the faithful servant having been bought and paid for the service of piety, “God gambles against the Satan’s cynical assertion that perfection is an illusion, that Job only serves God because of his continuous prosperity,” and “it is the Satanic fun with carrot and stick which reduces Job to Everyman.”⁽¹⁾ God is committed to establishing the possibility of disinterested piety at any cost, and authorizes terrible violence on the blameless and upright.

While it showcases forces of terror that renders the protective shield of piety all but meaningless, the book of Job soon turns the reader’s attention to another kind of violence, that is, verbal violence of sarcasm. Every speaker in the book resorts to an excessive dose of flesh-tearing speeches whose primary function is to hurt, humiliate, ridicule, and silence the opponent,⁽²⁾ as if it were a popular ancient rhetorical technique. No one, not even the Almighty,⁽³⁾ is immune from infectious verbal pungency, and each one aspires to top the others. What can possibly account for these unrestrained outbursts of sarcasm in the wisdom literature set out to delve into the grand problem of the innocent suffering in the universe supposedly well-designed by God?

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I. The Greatest Pain Job Had to Endure

In the book of Job the innocent sufferer is subjected to excruciating physical pain and suffering. In the first round of the test in chap. 1, Job loses everything and everyone dear to him. In spite of all, “Job did not sin or charge God with wrong-doing” (1:22, NRSV; translations below follow the NRSV, unless indicated otherwise), which did not stop but rather invited another round of suffering. “So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and inflicted loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes” (2:8). Excruciating physical suffering is presupposed throughout the book, but surprisingly, Job seldom dwells on it. In the poetic dialogue of the book, it is rather the verbal violence that is featured more prominently than physical pain. Judging from the way Job responds to his friends’ sarcastic remarks, it is clearly the words of sarcasm that bring Job the most unbearable pain and suffering.

Job’s words expose how verbal abuse constitutes an act of violence no less damaging than physical assault. The English Victorian novelist George Eliot exposes the physicality of verbal violence in sarcasm, when she comments, “Blows are sarcasm turned stupid: wit is a form of force that leaves the limps at rest.”⁽⁴⁾ In the book of Job, sarcasm tortures and tears apart the innocent sufferer.

The etymology of the term ‘sarcasm’ makes the word absolutely useful to describe the dynamic involved in the verbal violence that keeps on erupting in the book of Job. The English word is from Latin *sarcasmus*, which in turn came from a Greek verb *sarkazein* meaning, “to tear flesh.” While it may originally have been in reference to the biting of one’s own lips, it is generally the flesh of the opponent that is being targeted for injury in such caustic remarks. In the midst of flesh-tearing verbal violence targeted toward Job, his friends demonstrate their utter lack of understanding about the nature of Job’s suffering.

René Girard summons his most often quoted category of collective violence to describe the friends’ action against Job in their irrational animosity toward him. In an act of scapegoating, Job’s friends seek the resolution of the problem by charging Job with presumed guilt. Girard focuses on the key role the friends

play in the book, when he maintains that the main cause of Job's suffering "is neither divine, nor Satanic, nor material but human, only human."⁽⁵⁾ What do Job's human friends do most in the book of Job except talking viciously? "The three friends crush him with their speeches, they pulverize him with words."⁽⁶⁾ Job feels the pain of his flesh torn apart by their sarcastic speeches.

Toward the end of the book, however, the reader finds out that sarcasm is not merely a human device to put down the partner in conversation. In the book of Job, in which Job's friends have abandoned Job for the sake of doctrine, Yahweh speaks out of the whirlwind at a point where denouement is expected. Surprisingly, God does not rise above the foray of sarcasm. God's sarcastic approach to Job offers a thick wall through one has to look for the divine comfort in divine speeches, as the poem leaves little room for divine favor or favorable divinity. Why does God subject Job to "verbal laceration"?⁽⁷⁾

II. What Is Sarcasm?

Before one investigates the function of sarcasm in the book of Job, one may be well served by asking what constitutes sarcasm. In its common usage, sarcasm runs the gamut from a bad joke to a devastating speech, escaping any neat definition. Following the wisdom of Ferdinand de Saussure, who pointed out that one can find the meaning of a term only by stating what it is not, the following discussion makes its way toward a working description (not a definition) of sarcasm in comparison with other related verbal retorts.

Most often, sarcasm is confused with irony. While both can share the element of ridicule, in irony one says the opposite of what one wants to say. In sarcasm, one gets to say in a brutally frontal way whatever one wants to say and even more. Sarcasm is set apart from satire, as it is not necessarily intended to expose the opponent's moral lapse, vice, or folly.

Sarcasm is not a wit, either. Wit is based on a clever observation on reality or truth, but sarcasm needs no such constraint; it only needs a sharp edge to cut into the opponent's soul.⁽⁸⁾ As Dorothy Parker has once put it in an interview, "There is a helluva distance between wisecracking and wit. Wit has truth in it,

wisecracking is simply calisthenics with words.” Sarcasm requires neither truth nor beauty. Dorothy Parker herself made a name for sarcasm, as she made a comment on the death of President Calvin Coolidge: “How could they tell?” While her case of sarcasm contains an element of sour humor, sarcasm does not have to be funny to anyone. Sarcasm only needs contempt and the intent to humiliate the opponent.

Perhaps the meaning of sarcasm comes closest to being sardonic, a word whose etymology is associated with *herba Sardonia*. Its poison is believed to have corrosive effect of putting the eater’s face out of shape. Sarcasm seeks disfiguration of the targeted person.

Sarcasm, as a tool to hurt, humiliate, and ridicule the opponent, is certainly not a sophisticated oratorical skill, and is often placed below satire for its unsophisticated crudity and for lack of some higher moral lesson. Sarcasm has not yet made an autonomous literary genre, as its linguistic cousins and semantic nephews, such as diatribe, satire, libel, pamphlet, irony, lampoon, taunt, persiflage, etc. did. However, sarcasm is part of the familiar scene in religious, literary, and philosophical discourses.⁽⁹⁾

Sarcasm as a quasi-literary device often betrays the coarse nature of the subject matter, which is also the case in the book of Job. The theme of Job, however one may verbalize it, is a messy one, and sarcasm underscores it.

III. Sarcastic Remarks in Job

It is not an exact science to identify sarcastic remarks or their degree of malice. It is not because sarcastic remarks lack clarity—often, they are all too clear⁽¹⁰⁾--but because sarcasm is communicated or augmented by such nonverbal factors as facial expressions, bodily gestures like looking away, shrugging shoulders, or rolling eyes. “For, after all, a smile, physiologically speaking, is a step on the road to a snarl and a bit (cf. ‘sarcasm,’ a ‘biting remark’).”⁽¹¹⁾ As paralinguistic studies show, the addition of these non-verbal features of communication or the omission of a single comma can subvert any discourse and turn it on its head.⁽¹²⁾ As long as there is intent to show contempt, sarcasm

could be done even in silence, as in silence of protest that speaks louder than words. The reader himself or herself will always have a certain degree of control to identify the words in the text as either more or less sarcastic. Therefore, the examples offered in the next section come with the banner of *caveat emptor*.

The first clear case of sarcasm comes from the Satan (*ha-Satan*). This adversarial figure in Job 1 and 2 is a member of the heavenly council, acting as a district attorney of the earth, rather than being the inherently evil being of later apocalyptic writings, but one cannot miss the insolent tone in his remarks.⁽¹³⁾ When Yahweh asks, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil” (1:8), Satan responds to the question with a question, which is often the case in a sarcastic retort. Rabbi Robert Gordis comments with wit, “[W]e have a Jewish Satan here, who answers a question by a question.”⁽¹⁴⁾ Satan asks: “Does Job fear for nothing? Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land” (1:9-10).⁽¹⁵⁾ In other words, Satan is asking if God realizes how much God is paying the fellow to be pious. Job is God’s pride, but at what price?

Between Satan’s retort and the friends’ torture, there is Job’s wife. She says, possibly quite sarcastically, “You still⁽¹⁶⁾ persist in your integrity?” She adds, “Bless God⁽¹⁷⁾ and die” (2:9), for which remark Augustine accorded her with the title of *diaboli adiutrix*. Job’s response could be just as sarcastic. “You speak as any foolish woman would speak” (2:10). Plainly, Job is saying to her, “You are a fool.”

In the poetic portion of the book, sarcasm flares up. After the all too brief diplomatic preamble by Eliphaz the Temanite, the first friend’s speech turns quickly to sarcasm. Many commentators have attempted to suggest that Eliphaz is less than hostile at least in the first cycle of the friends’ speeches, but the note of sarcasm in his insinuation about Job’s presumed guilt does not exonerate the Temanite friend so easily. In response to Job’s utter dismay in the face of the suffering he did not deserve, Eliphaz dares to recommend to Job an alternative

perspective on his suffering: “Think now, who that was innocent ever perished?” (4:7) Eliphaz’s answer is not even ambiguous, but places squarely on Job’s weary shoulders the burden of showing his innocence by not perishing.

In 4:12ff. Eliphaz introduces a nocturnal vision he had: “Now a word came stealing to me.... I heard a voice, ‘Can mortals be righteous before God? Can human beings pure before their Maker?’” (4:12-17) Eliphaz’s words again alludes to Job’s possible guilt, while he excuses himself from the burden of proof, since after all he only heard a fleeting voice! Eliphaz’s maxim in 5:2 borders on an outright death wish: “Surely vexation kills the fool, and jealousy slays the simple.” (5:2).

Job’s response is no less sarcastic. Job comments on Eliphaz’s speech “Does the wild ass bray over its grass, or the ox low over its fodder?” (6:5) In these cryptic words Job portrays his friend as an animal making a bestial cry.⁽¹⁸⁾ As he fails to find comfort in the company of his friends, Job concludes: “My comrades are fickle, like a wadi, // Like a bed on which streams once ran” (6:17 JPS). Now you see, now you don’t.

Bildad also adds emphasis to his *topos* with sarcasm, as he says, “Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh?” (8:11a) Zophar proves to be no exception. “Should your babble put others to silence, and when you mock, shall no one shame you?” (11:3), as he finds Job’s sarcasm out of control. Raymond P. Scheindlin’s rendering of the verse features the key word in it: “You want to silence people with your bluster, cow them with sarcasm, no one restrains you.”⁽¹⁹⁾ In 11:4, Zophar says to Job, “For you say, ‘My conduct is pure, and I am clean in God’s sight.’” While most translations have chosen to say, “in God’s sight,” Scheindlin preserves the Hebrew text, which has the second person pronominal suffix (*bě‘ênêkā*), and adds sarcastic note by printing the second person pronoun in italics.⁽²⁰⁾ Hence Scheindlin’s translation: “You say, ‘My teaching’s perfect,’ ‘I was pious’—Yes, in *your eyes*.”⁽²¹⁾

To Zophar, Job retorts: “But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you” (12:7-8). In his next

turn, Bildad launches his offence at Job's attribution of wisdom to the animal kingdom: "Why are we counted as cattle? Why are we stupid in your sight?" (18:3) Job finds his friends' speeches baseless, senseless, and hurtful. R. B. Y. Scott comments on the shift in the roles of the friends from comforters to tormentors, when he says, "In the heat of his argument with the three sages who came to console but remained to reproach him, Job cries out sarcastically, 'Truly you are men of knowledge, and yours is perfect wisdom! But I have a mind as well as you. I am not your inferior!'"²² Instead of comforting Job, their words of wisdom leave Job deeply wounded.

They have gaped at me with their mouths;
they have struck me insolently on the cheek;
they mass themselves against me (16:10).

The best thing Job could expect from the friends would be silence. "As for you, you whitewash with lies; all of you are worthless physicians. If you would only keep silent, that would be your wisdom!" (13:4-5) Later in his soliloquy Job sums up his assessment of his friends' hellish help: "But now they make sport of me, those who are younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock" (30:1).

Job's sarcasm is not limited to his friends, but also extended to God. Judging from his experience, Job finds God totally confused. Job asks, "Am I the Sea, or the Dragon, that you set me a guard over me?" (7:12) For this rhetorical question, Elie Wiesel offers a legend: "More in bewilderment than in sorrow, Job turned to God: Master of the Universe, is it possible that a storm passed before You causing You to confuse *Iyob* [Job] with *Oyeb* [Enemy]?"²³ The interpretive sarcasm of later generations posits that Job's experience might have been a case of mistaken identity due to God's ineptitude in deciphering the Hebrew consonantal text. Job knows the ancient myths that give an account of God who overcomes the chaotic monster and accomplishes creation, and portrays a picture of God who cannot tell a creature from a chaotic monster. David J. A. Clines detects a case of sarcasm, when "Job puts it, sardonically: 'Being God, he never withdraws his anger' (9:13)."²⁴

In his extended discourse in 12:13-25, Job begins with laudatory language on the divine wisdom and power. “With God are wisdom and strength; he has counsel and understanding” (12:13); however, instead of using the divine wisdom and strength, counsel and understanding for any perceivably constructive way, God is engaged in the rampage of tearing down God’s own creation beyond repair (12:14). As if anticipating what God is going to say later about light and darkness in the universe (38:17, 19), Job offers a doxology of sarcasm: “He uncovers the deeps out of darkness, and brings deep darkness to light” (12:22). T.#N.#D. Mettinger observes: “This satirical doxology is one of the striking examples in the Job speeches of the use of perverted hymnic praise to point up the issue.”⁽²⁵⁾ Strain of praise is enlisted as a weapon of deconstruction, for God said, “Let there be chaos,” and there was chaos. Job “raise[s] the one issue that is always deliberately avoided in the Dialogue/Appeal genre as well as in the personal laments they so closely resemble: the issue of the righteousness of (a) god. If a god can allow or even instigate adverse action against a righteous and worshipful human being, can he be viewed as a moral deity?”⁽²⁶⁾

As the fiery speeches among the friends subside, Yahweh speaks out of the whirlwind, supposedly to wrap up the debate and resolve the problem of innocent suffering. However, one is again greeted by concatenated sarcasm—this time on the part of the divine. God begins with rebuke seasoned with ridicule. “Who is this that darkens counsel (*’ētzāh*) by words without knowledge?” (38:2) Job has disrupted God’s design (*’ētzāh*), as he had no access to the larger picture, whatever that may be. “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding” (38:4). God charges Job not only with ignorance, but also with presumptuousness, which God finds nothing but laughable. “Surely you know, for you were born then, and the number of your days are great!” (38:21)⁽²⁷⁾ In these words God dwindles Job into a Promethean Lilliput.

For Job 38:21, major commentators show an agreement—which is extremely rare in the Joban studies—that the verse is an epitome of the divine sarcasm. H. H. Rowley summarizes the situation with a statement that “Yahweh

is represented as a master of sarcasm.”⁽²⁸⁾ R. E. Murphy agrees that “There is heavy sarcasm in 38:21,” but adds immediately, “But mostly there is pleasant irony as the Lord rolls out the questions about the works of creation,” quoting G. K. Chesterton, “The maker of all things is astonished at the things He has Himself made.”⁽²⁹⁾ It goes without saying that such epexegetical statements only demonstrate how the divine sarcasm has made its readers uneasy.

Job’s first response was not enough to dissuade God from issuing the second speech, in which God continues sarcasm. “Look on all who are proud, and bring them low; tread down the wicked where they stand. Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in the world below. Then I will also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can bring salvation” (40:12-14). Against the backdrop of a task impossible for Job, God offers a reward many humans claimed in a quixotic fashion.

IV. Function of Sarcasm in the Book of Job

Now what are all these sarcastic words supposed to achieve? Doesn’t sarcasm only betray the ill-tempered manner of the speaker who resorts to such a mean device? Is there any essential role sarcasm plays in any noble literary exercise, let alone the drama of Job?

A close look reveals that in the case of the book of Job sarcasm may be serving a variety of purposes. For instance, Satan’s bedeviling, if not demonic, sarcasm hints at the crudity of the wager that endangers the most righteous person in the east. Satan is featured as the proverbial “someone else to blame,” and may slightly alleviate raw callousness of the decision of the divine council, even though one cannot but wonder if the divine council had nothing better to do than gambling on the innocent person. What happened to the divine council that used to pass resolutions on the creation as in Genesis 1 and the redemption as in Isaiah 40? If one grants that Job’s wife’s response also contains a note of sarcasm, her sour words vent extreme frustration on her part.⁽³⁰⁾

Job’s friends’ sarcasm definitely helps to highlight their mean-spirited character. They do not only lack the capacity of understanding the real issue

involved in the problem of Job's suffering, but also the sensitivity to empathize with the man in suffering. Sarcastic remarks by Job's friends incriminate the three sages for apathetic, or all too pathetic, obsession with traditional wisdom.

In the larger context of the three cycles of speeches in the poetic portion of the book, sarcasm serves as an effective literary device to demonstrate how the process of communication among the friends breaks down and the sages' argument on Job's suffering reaches *aporia*. The garbled third cycle, which certainly may have been due to an accident in transmission, illustrates fortuitously the garbled state of discourse that wanes into cacaphony. As the conversation progresses, it becomes less and less important to each other whether they listen to and understand each other, and gradually, the poison of sarcasm consumes the participants in the dialogue. In the end the characters in the book of Job are spent. They are exhausted. Elihu's speeches are notoriously annoying, as he makes a cantankerous cameo appearance when the light on the stage is already dim. Is there no end to the abusive speeches?

While the sarcastic exchanges on the earth fulfill a literary function that enhances the tone of dispute, Job's sarcasm directed to God raises a theological crisis, as it rolls out "the words that scandalize the theological sensibilities of his friends."⁽³¹⁾ Job expresses the level of his anxiousness for locating some explanation of his suffering, as he counters "God as the direct enemy of men, delighting in torturing them, hovering over them like what we might call the caricature of a devil, gnashing his teeth, 'sharpening' his eyes (the Greek translation mentions 'daggers of the eyes') and splitting open Job's intestines."⁽³²⁾ As Langdon Gilkey observes, that somewhere in the dialogues the focus is shifted from Job the innocent to Job the courageous.⁽³³⁾ Job boldly stands before God with the demand for justice he expects God to respect. "All Job's protestations aimed at Yahweh presuppose that he has some standard by which he can call God to account."⁽³⁴⁾ Job's sarcasm underscores how convinced he is that God has fallen short of the standard.

In the divine speeches sarcasm carries on the energy of the whirlwind, which begins with a rebuke: "Who is this that darkens the counsel with ignorant

words?” The Yahweh speeches often have been touted as “the crown and climax” (E. Sellin) and for “marvelous images expressed in marvelous words” (D. B. MacDonald), but they have also received less than flattering words as a case of “magnificent impertinence” (C. J. Ball). It has been said to be like shaking a rattle at a crying child to divert its attention from hunger” (R. A. F. McKenzie). One commentator retorts, “[T]his beautiful nature poem could not heal a sick heart” (P. Volz).⁽³⁵⁾

These scholars shed light on the possible message of the divine speeches out of the whirlwind—after all the Yahweh speeches are strategically located where one would expect some kind of resolution of the book,⁽³⁶⁾ but a major question remains. How should one handle such a heavy dose of sarcasm on the part of the divine?⁽³⁷⁾ Irrelevance is not the first problem the divine speeches run into with interpreters, as one has to wonder why God’s speeches should be so sore.

James L. Crenshaw attempts in vain to blunt the sharp edge of the divine speech, when he says, “The first speech resembles a majestic harangue, for God mockingly asks Job where he was during the creation of the world, and challenges him to govern nature’s powerful forces and to tame those creatures that dwelt beyond the regions of human habitation.”⁽³⁸⁾ There is no contest here, however, for Job is disqualified before he enters the arena.

If one were to accept the speeches of Yahweh as a resolution—however satisfactory it may be—of the book, one cannot sidestep the thorny question of why the poet of Job presents a sarcastic deity instead of a God who “will wipe away the tears from all faces” as in the Isaiah Apocalypse (Isa 25:8). The divine sarcasm only raises a question concerning “the unexpected dark side of God.”⁽³⁹⁾

Gustavo Gutiérrez says, “The scorned of this world are those whom the God of love prefers.”⁽⁴⁰⁾ The tone with which God speaks in the Yahweh speeches, however, makes one wonder in what sense the scorned by God is God’s favorite. The divine sarcasm renders Carl Jung’s portrayal of a near-schizophrenic divinity more credible than that of the liberation theologian.⁽⁴¹⁾

There may be no reason to deny God the most effective tool of persuasion. When theodicy is prepared to let God get away with murder, God’s words may

be able to create praise and bruise at the same time. Besides, the divine sarcasm in the Yahweh speeches effectively evinces how seriously God took Job's challenge.⁽⁴²⁾

Later in the epilogue, God admits that Job was after all right about God. In the last divine speech in the book of Job, God says to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me *what is right* (*někônāh*), as my servant Job has" (42:7; emphasis added)⁽⁴³⁾ That is the final verdict. Until God reaches the momentous declaration of Job's rightness (*někônāh*), God resorts to so much sarcasm. What can account for this divine sarcasm in a meaningful way?

The question brings back the issue the book began with. Is there such thing as disinterested piety? "It is impossible for the satan to deny that Job is a good and devout man. What he questions is rather the disinterestedness of Job's service of God, his lack of concern for a reward."⁽⁴⁴⁾ Job has proved that totally disinterested piety does exist. Does Job fear God for no reason? Yes, he is pious for no reason. There is such a thing as disinterested piety. Job fears God for nothing, absolutely nothing.

V. The Cost of the Test

In the book of Job, verbal violence is not merely a rhetorical device to portray the sour mood of the story of the innocent sufferer. In the midst of the ubiquity of the mean spirit palpable in sarcastic remarks, the verbal violence in the book of Job does not only produce a dramatic effect, but also takes the role of safeguarding arduously the divine wager that tests whether Job's piety is indeed "for nothing" (*hinnām*). If one is to establish that Job indeed fears God for nothing, there cannot be a hint of favor. By integrating verbal abuse into the structure of the thematic quest Job is thrown into, the Joban poet exposes the place of terror deeply entrenched in human context.

In the final analysis God has won the bet, which is why Satan is not allowed to come back, for Job has proven that there is such a beast as disinterested piety. Now one can expect to find someone devoted to God without expecting

any reward. The case has been made in a tightly controlled experiment that combines *in vivo* and *in vitro*. God ran the test and won the contest, but at the expense of God's most faithful that has ever lived.

The case is won, but only at an exorbitant cost. A poet has written, God "does not love. He Is."⁽⁴⁵⁾ This often quoted line in *J.B.*, Archibald MacLeish's play based on the book of Job, is preceded by the words of Sarah, J.B.'s wife. She says to him, "I love you. I couldn't help you any more. You wanted justice and there was none—only love," which in turn was a response to J.B., who had said to her, "Why did you leave me alone?" In the biblical story of Job, the sufferer may ask God and humans: "Why didn't you leave me alone?"⁽⁴⁶⁾

Now Job's perseverance and persistence survive the sarcasm of his wife, the sarcasm of his friends, and ultimately the sarcasm of Yahweh. No modicum of warm treatment of any sort is calling forth Job's piety. As Job weathers the sarcasm of all shapes from all sides, the poet is prepared to bolster the major question he started the book with. Did Job fear God for nothing (*hinnām*)? Indeed, he did. *Hinnām*. Absolutely for nothing—and Job had to pay dearly for that 'nothing.'

Note

- (1) Ulrich Simon. *Pity and Terror: Christianity and Tragedy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 37.
- (2) In the Hebrew Bible, two books of reflective wisdom share sarcasm as a common feature, as they expose the limitation of the traditional wisdom. As Robert Gordis points out, however, the book of Ecclesiastes has taken beatings for skepticism and heresy, while the book of Job has not (*The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1965, p. 221). Interpreters have judged the book of Ecclesiastes to be far more dangerous than the book of Job, which contains no less sarcasm, or arguably even more verbal violence than the book of Ecclesiastes.
- (3) Traditional but lexically dubious rendering of *Shaddai*.
- (4) George Eliot, *Felix Holt, the Radical* (ed. Fred C. Thompson; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), II.xxx, p. 245.
- (5) René Girard, "'The Ancient Trail Trodden by the Wicked': Job as Scapegoat," in *The Book of Job* (ed. Harold Bloom; Modern Critical Interpretations; New York/New Haven/Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1998), p. 103. What Oscar Wilde once said about Bernard Shaw may serve as an accurate description of Job's situation: "He hasn't an enemy in the world, and none of his friends like him" (Bernard Shaw, *Sixteen Self Sketches*, London: Constable, 1949, p. 183).
- (6) Girard, "Job as Scapegoat," p. 117.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Sarcasm is also separated from persiflage, which is described as light banter, repartee, or raillery.
- (9) With all its crudity sarcasm appears in religious, literary, and philosophical discourses of the notables such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Kierkegaard. For example, in his refutation against Gnostics, Irenaeus says, "Others invoke certain Hebrew names, in order to impress the initiates even more, thus, '*Basema chamosse baaiobara baaiabora mistadia ruada kousta babophor calachthei*'" (*Against Heresies*, I.21.3). Except the first word meaning 'in the Name' the formula is gibberish. In his often quoted misogynic statement, Tertullian said, "You are the Devil's gateway. You are the unsealer of that forbidden tree. You are the first deserter of the divine law. You are she who persuaded him whom the Devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die" (*de Cult Fem* 1.1).
- (10) Some examples of sarcasm are based on ethnic stereotype. For example, *querelle d'Allemand* for petty quarrel, *polnische Wirtschaft* for poor management, *Le petit Juif* for funny bone, and so forth. These are now put out of use for political correctness.
- (11) Howard Nemerov, *Reflexions on Poetry & Poetics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1972), p. 11.

- (12) A French playwright and the proponent of *l'école du silence* or the art of the unexpressed, Jean-Jacques Bernard argues that the character's attitudes are expressed by the facial expressions and gestures, and not by their dialogue. See his *Martine: pièce en cinq tableaux* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1953).
- (13) The JPS renders *ha-satan* as "the Adversary."
- (14) Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), p. 15.
- (15) In Job 2, Satan cries foul. "Skin for skin! All that people have they will give to save their lives. But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face" (2:4-5). The unfamiliar proverb may have been designed to be more caustic than it is made out to be in the English translations. With these words Satan charges that the first test was tainted, since there was a residue of God's protection.
- (16) In the Hebrew text there is a disjunctive accent at this point.
- (17) *bārēk 'ēlōhīm* is usually construed as an euphemism for "curse God," which the pious scribe was not willing to say even within the circumference of quotation marks. Literal translation communicates better than otherwise the pungent edge of her imperative, especially when one allows the possibility of sarcastic tone in her death wish.
- (18) One may compare this with a contemporary expression of "Is that the dog barking?"
- (19) Raymond P. Scheindlin, *The Book of Job* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), p. 77; emphasis added.
- (20) The NRSV rendering is based on the Septuagint, which reads *enantion autou*.
- (21) Scheindlin, *The Book of Job*, p. 77; italics his.
- (22) R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.; London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1971), p. 136.
- (23) Elie Wiesel, *Messengers of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends* (New York: Summit Books, 1976), p. 222.
- (24) David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20* (WBC 17; Dallas, TX: Word Books, Publishers, 1989), p. xliii.
- (25) Trygve N. D. Mettinger, "The God of Job: Avenger, Tyrant, or Victor?" in *The Voice from the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job* (eds. Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), p. 43.
- (26) Bruce Zuckerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 99.
- (27) One might paraphrase Job's retort as follows: "Juvenile ancient of days!"
- (28) H. H. Rowley, *Job* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co.; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott Publ., 1976), p. 244.
- (29) Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), p. 43.

- (30) Job's wife in the MT is in sharp contrast with other ancient reflections on her in the LXX and the Testament of Job, in which she is portrayed to abide with Job through the years of his suffering.
- (31) William P. Brown, *Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), p. 82.
- (32) Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 217.
- (33) Langdon Gilkey, "Power, Order, Justice, and Redemption: Theological Comments on Job," in *The Voice from the Whirlwind* (eds. Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), pp. 159-71.
- (34) U. Milo Kaufmann, "Expostulation with the Divine: A Note on Contrasting Attitudes in Greek and Hebrew Piety," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of the Book of Job* (ed. Paul S. Sanders; Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 68.
- (35) Quotations collected by Luis Alonso-Schökel, "God's Answer to Job," in *Job and the Silence of God* (eds. Christian Duquoc and Casiano Floristán; Concilium; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; New York: Seabury Press., 1983), p. 45.
- (36) In his *Jahwes Entgegnung an Ijob* (FRLANT 121; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), Othmar Keel demonstrates through an iconographical study that the Yahweh speeches present a God who overcomes evil forces in creation.
- (37) Norman Habel observes that "Job and the friends repeatedly use verbal irony and sarcasm as a technique for exposing the false perceptions of their opponents," but does not apply the same observation to the speeches of God, which he only faults with being "tangential" (*The Book of Job: A Commentary*, OTL, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985, pp. 52-53).
- (38) James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), p. 110.
- (39) Habel, *The Book of Job*, pp. 68-69.
- (40) Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (tr. Matthew J. O'Connell; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), p. xii.
- (41) C. G. Jung, *Answer to Job* (tr. R. F. C. Hull; Bollingen Series; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).
- (42) Job responds to God, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see you; therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes" (42:5-6). Traditionally, these words are read as Job's pious acquiescence to the divine reply. The Qumran Targum of Job 42:6 reads: *'l kn 'nsh w'tmh' // w'hw' l'pr wqtm*, "Thus I am poured out and dissolved/smitten(?) // And am become dust and ashes" (Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, AB 15, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., p. 349). While this brings a certain closure to Job's discourse, it has spurred questions, as well. While some have seen here a total surrender to God (Terrien) or ironical reconciliation on God's terms (Good), others suspect a tone of comic irony (Whedbee and Robertson). Elie Wiesel says, "Much as I admired Job's passionate rebellion, I am deeply troubled by his hasty

abdication. He appeared to me more human when he was cursed and grief-stricken, more dignified than after he built his lavish residences under the sign of his newly found faith in divine glory and mercy” (*Messengers of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends*, New York: Summit Books, 1976, p. 233). Job’s words may well be a sarcastic retort, as one may imagine Job shaking his fist, saying, “Alright, alright! I understand. You are worse than I thought. I despise myself. I am sorry. I am nothing but dust and ashes.”

- (43) In a literary study of the book of Job, David Robertson concludes that in the book of Job “God is the object of an ironic joke,” for God’s pronouncement in 42:7 does not mean what it says and does not say what it means, for the prose seems to have in mind a different set of speeches in which “Job argued that God is just, and the friends that he is unjust” (*The Old Testament and the Literary Critic*; GBSOT; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977, pp. 53-54). Cf. Williams, James G. “‘You Have Not Spoken Truth of Me’: Mystery and Irony in Job.” *ZAW* 83 (1971) 231-55.
- (44) Gutiérrez, *On Job*, p. 4.
- (45) Archibald MacLeish, *J.B.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1956), p. 152.
- (46) Ibid, p. 151. Cf. M. Tsevat couches the poetic thought in theological terms, when he says, “He Who speaks to man in the Book of Job is neither adjust nor an unjust god but God” (“The Meaning of the Book of Job,” *HUCA* 37, 1966, p. 105).

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ヨブ記における言語的暴力について

〈 要 約 〉

ジン・ヒー・ハン

旧約聖書ヨブ記の言語上の特徴の一つは、登場人物たちが、論敵に対して過度の皮肉や中傷や誹謗をストレートに表白している点にみられるが、これはヨブ記記者が、論敵を傷つけ、面目を失わせ、また中傷するために「サーカズム」を言語学的道具としてあえて用いたことによる。本論考は、こうした「サーカズム」に基づく言語による暴力、肉を裂くようなこの言語的暴力の問題性に焦点を当て、その批判的分析を試みるものである。

それにしてもヨブ記に登場するすべての話し手が、あたかも古代世界の一つの共有された技術であるかのように、諸種の「サーカズム」の手法を用いて、自らの主張を行っている。皮肉、中傷、誹謗などによる「サーカズム」の浸透は、ヨブ記に独特の雰囲気を与えることになる。本論考は、こうした「サーカズム」の多用が、形式面でも内容面でも、ヨブ記全体のどのような影響力を与えているのかを、いくつかの箇所を取り上げることによって検討する。この問題の研究には一つの困難さがつきまわっているが、それは、「サーカズム」の使用に関して、一般的法則性のもとより、類型論や指針のようなものもなかなか見いだせないことである。しかしながら、幾多の言語的暴力にもたじろぐことなく、人間の報償や神の報償をもまったく期待することなく、もくもくと信仰の敬虔に徹したヨブの生き方は、周囲の暴力的環境との際だったコントラストにおいて、その救済的力と論理をいかに示すものとして貴重である。